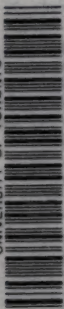


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*The Irish
Situation*



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The Irish Situation

Stephen Gwynn

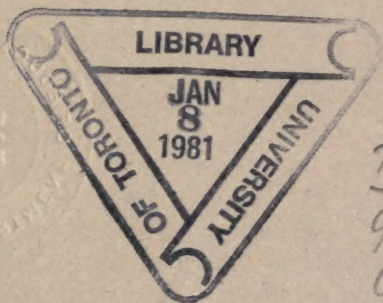


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The Irish Situation

I

FIVE years have elapsed since the Easter Rising of 1916; six and a half since the outbreak of European War; eight since the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force. These are the main marking points in the evolution which has transformed Ireland from a peaceful country into a theatre of operations for three armed forces, all differing in purpose and control; these milestones mark stages for Ireland on a new track of political development. But survey of the situation must begin a good deal farther back if it is to be intelligent, or intelligible to the general reader who has not closely followed Irish affairs.

At the joining point between this century and the last the South African War furnished illustration of the permanent contradictions which characterise the relations between Ireland and Great Britain. In Ireland there

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was a fierce outburst of anti-British feeling, strengthened and dignified by the sense that the great Power which held Ireland by force was using that same force without justice against a small, free nation. In England there was angry resentment of this new manifestation of what England held to be disloyalty. Explosive scenes in Parliament emphasised this disunion within the United Kingdom; yet at the same time London was swept by a brief wave of sentimental gratitude for the valour shown by Irish troops; and, of the three outstanding leaders in the war, Lord Roberts and Sir John French were thoroughly normal representative types of the Irish Protestant gentry, while Lord Kitchener also was claimed as Irish by many in virtue of his Irish upbringing.

These reminders, on the one hand, that Ireland was a weakness and a discredit to the British Empire, and, on the other, that it might be a source of honourable strength, were probably not without their effect on the minds of two British statesmen, both closely connected with Ireland. Lord Lansdowne, then Foreign Secretary, remembered that, as Viceroy in India, he had known one Irishman of old Catholic stock whose force of character and whose insight proved invaluable in the settlement of vexed questions concerning land

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tenure; and upon his advice Sir Antony MacDonnell was brought home to be Under Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, that is, permanent chief of Irish administration. At the same time Mr. George Wyndham, descended from the great Geraldine House of Kildare, became Chief Secretary. These two men were jointly responsible for the Land Purchase Act of 1903, which decided in principle that all Irish landlords should be bought out on terms so favourable that they could maintain their old way of life in their old homes, but that the land of Ireland should be owned by the men who farmed it, payment being made by a long series of annuities, less in every case than the rent which had been paid in the past.

This Act, though its principle has still not been carried out over the whole of Ireland, yet marked the triumph of a revolution. Forty years ago agricultural Ireland was governed entirely by the landlord class, who were with few exceptions Protestant. Their power was broken by the Land Act of 1881, which ordained that rents should be fixed by law and that no man should be forced to give up his holding while he paid the rent so fixed. In substance, the Wyndham Act only introduced the sound system of land purchase which Parnell had advocated, instead of the unsound one of repeated rent fixings. But in essence the Act

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represented the acceptance of the new order by the landlord class. It was based on a compact reached between great Unionist landlords and leading Nationalist representatives of the tenant interest.

In 1898 the establishment of a system of Local Government based on popular representation had transferred the control of parish and county business from the privileged class to the community at large. Thus it may be said that from the beginning of the present century Irishmen have possessed full freedom in their strictly local affairs, and have been liberated from that control over their personal and political action which was exercised by the landowning class. It has been admitted, moreover, by representatives of the dispossessed interest, for instance by the Duke of Abercorn in the Irish Convention, that these changes were necessary and have been beneficent. But the reforms came in the wrong way. They were the result of concessions made to violence after appeal to argument and justice had failed. They earned and they deserved no responsive gratitude. Gratitude was felt to individuals—to Mr. Gladstone chiefly, and this sentiment is not dead yet among men of the older generation; it was felt also to Mr. Wyndham, but the sequel prevented any extension of it to Mr. Wyndham's colleagues.

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Both he and Sir Antony MacDonnell were fully aware that to settle the land question did not dispose of the Irish problem. Nationalist Ireland, which returned 80 per cent of the Irish Members of Parliament, had also its elected representatives in control of all purely local business ; but the central administration of the country was neither responsible to Ireland nor controlled by it. A plan was considered by the Chief Secretary and his associates for devolving upon some representative Irish body the charge of the superior departments ; so came into fashion the word "devolution." It was an attempt to introduce Home Rule by instalments. As soon as rumour spread of the attempt, outcry was raised, especially by the Unionists of Ulster. Mr. Wyndham was immediately thrown overboard by Mr. Balfour, the Prime Minister.

Nationalist Ireland was at this moment, in 1904, mainly preoccupied with the new working of land purchase, then proceeding very rapidly. Moreover, it was clear to all that the days of Tory ascendancy, which had lasted with one brief ineffectual interval since 1886, were at last numbered. Ireland at this moment realised that much had been gained under the rule of its traditional opponents ; much more was hoped from the approaching advent to power of its traditional friends.

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One thing had sunk deep into the Irish mind. Constitutional agitation had made good; though with that conviction went the other, that for Irishmen to get a bad law changed the law must be defied and broken. Yet without recourse to arms great things had been gained, and the men who came into the first District or County Councils, and the men who saw land purchase first introduced, knew and remembered the old order. John Roche, long Member of Parliament for East Galway, told me that the first public office to which he was elected was that of Poor Law Guardian—an office which was elective even under the old order. That same day he received an intimation from the agent that it was not the custom of the estate for tenants to hold such offices. Eviction from his farm and mill was the alternative, and he resigned; but he spent the rest of his life in political conflict, and lived to vote for the Act under which his landlord, Lord Clanricarde, was compulsorily expropriated. The Clanricarde case was exceptional; but every landlord had this power, and that power was now broken. Another veteran of the land war, John Fitzgibbon, said that he had seen in his day the greatest revolution ever effected by an unarmed people.

Such men as these, who had been in jail half a dozen times for their part in the fight, were

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incapable of believing that the country would ever turn from them, or refuse to accept their guidance. Yet already, in 1905, there was a generation to whom the story of the land war of the eighties and the whole Parnell tradition was only a story, and a story of which they were tired. They were weary also of being put down by their elders, who told them that they had never known what it was to do a hard day's work for Ireland. Control in local affairs was generally claimed by the veterans, and conceded to them. The younger generation were not disinclined to look for interests elsewhere. Some of them found these in the Gaelic League, which after ten years of struggle had attained considerable strength. Its President, Douglas Hyde, was at least as popular a figure in Ireland as any parliamentary leader; and although it was avowedly non-political, its whole appeal was to the spirit of nationalism. It was a new appeal, and one which gave the younger generation at least a retort to their elders. The older generation had thought about two things only—Home Rule and the land. Now, they were told that to revive the dying language was equally important; that Home Rule would be an empty symbol if Ireland lost its distinctive tongue; and that to free the land and make the farmer prosperous was of little service unless Irish industries were protected against foreign and

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especially English competition. All this angered the elder generation, and led to a severance of political sympathy between them and the young; thus providing a natural recruiting ground for the new party, which began to make older Nationalists aware of its existence.

During the whole of the period that has been reviewed, a propaganda, or rather a propagandist, had been active. In 1899 Mr. Arthur Griffiths founded *The United Irishman*, reviving the name of John Mitchel's rebel paper. He revived more than the name: since Mitchel there had been no publicist in Ireland possessing so trenchant a style. Yet it may be fairly said that without the Gaelic League, inspired by Hyde's most attractive personality, Mr. Griffiths would hardly have succeeded so far as he did. The Gaelic League conducted necessarily a vehement propaganda against anglicisation: from the point of view of a movement to restore Irish speech, English was the enemy. From the point of view of Mr. Griffiths, preaching the independence of Ireland, the enemy was England. With great skill he furnished Gaelic students with a parallel from the history of a country which had recovered both its independence and its language. His pamphlet, *The Resurrection of Hungary*, preached all the things which the

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Gaelic League preached, and preached them with a political application. It was not difficult to represent the English Parliament as a potent engine of anglicisation : and Ireland was exhorted to look within doors, to rely on "ourselves alone." Various minor organisations with Gaelic names came into being, but Sinn Féin ("Ourselves") was the name that stuck. The proposal to re-establish Irish independence through a general agreement to make English law and government unworkable came to be known as the Sinn Féin policy. The object defined was the recovery of independence under a joint crown—herein conforming to what Hungary had achieved ; and as a first practical step was recommended the withdrawal of all Members from Westminster. They were to stay at home and help to recreate Irish industries. All resistance was to be passive. Refusal to pay taxes was obviously a part of the programme, but since three-fifths of Irish taxes were levied indirectly, this was not very practicable, unless the Irish people abandoned the use of alcohol, tobacco, tea, and so forth. The one important item of direct levy, income-tax, was not at this period to any great extent paid by those who sympathised with Sinn Féin.

The new policy did not make much headway. In 1908, when the old constitutional movement

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had experienced a severe set-back, Mr. Dolan, Member for Leitrim, resigned his seat and stood again as a Sinn Féiner; he was defeated so heavily that Sinn Féin did not contest a seat again till 1916. It succeeded, however, in returning some members to the Dublin Corporation.

None the less, constitutional Nationalism was losing ground in these years. Liberalism in England had decided that the Home Rule question was one of secondary importance and could wait. The group headed by Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, and Mr. Haldane announced that in order to get a clear vote on the issue of Free Trade, they pledged themselves to oppose the introduction of a Home Rule Bill in the Parliament which was to be elected at the beginning of 1906. The result was that a House of Commons in which the declared opponents of Home Rule did not number one-third could do nothing on this matter, except take up the attempt abandoned by Mr. Wyndham. The Bill for establishing an elective Irish Council to control Irish administration proved a grievous disappointment when introduced in 1907. Mr. Redmond made it plain in the House of Commons that he desired to accept it; but so strong a feeling of revolt was shown in Ireland that he himself proposed its rejection at a Convention in

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Dublin. The most important Irish measure passed in that Parliament was the Irish University Act, endowing a National University with colleges at Dublin, Cork, and Galway—which have become forcing-houses of the Sinn Féin faith.

Yet in 1910 the conflict between Lords and Commons which arose over the rejection of Mr. Lloyd George's Budget was skilfully turned to account by the Irish leader, who recognised that Liberals would always fight the veto of the Lords on unfavourable ground if they fought it in regard to an Irish measure. The Parliament returned in January 1910 was so composed that the Irish vote could control the fate of government; and Mr. Asquith, now Prime Minister, had pledged himself, if returned to power, to curtail the veto of the Lords, and to use the power thus gained to carry a Home Rule Bill. The second election held in the same year reproduced the same parliamentary situation; and it was felt on all hands that Ireland had its chance. In Ireland itself Nationalist feeling was strong and confident. Yet the position of the recognised party and its leader was in no way secure. Mr. O'Brien had secured a following of ten, which included Mr. Healy, who, like Mr. O'Brien, was animated by inveterate personal antipathy to those who had been his close

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colleagues under Parnell. The most widely circulated Nationalist paper was directed by an able man under the same predisposition. To outward appearance these were the main dangers. Yet in the university, and throughout the wide following of the Gaelic League, there was a more serious estrangement of the young.

Up to 1912 no irremediable cleavage had produced itself. The Home Rule Bill was accepted by all Nationalist Ireland in good faith as a fair measure of self-government. A vast open-air meeting was held in Dublin to endorse this acceptance, and among the speakers was Patrick Pearse, who stood on a platform outside the General Post Office, where four years later he was to launch his rebellion. Rejection by the Lords was foreseen; but it was assumed that since this had been made the test question for the trial of strength between the hereditary and the elected Houses, British democracy would not give way.

The fatal blow to constitutional policy in Nationalist Ireland, entailing the destruction of a party which frankly accepted the idea of a settlement within the Empire, did not come from any propaganda of Sinn Féin. Neither Mr. Griffiths, nor the Gaelic League, nor Pearse, nor all of them together could have

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made Ireland rebel and Republican. That achievement was for others. It was the work of those who styled themselves specially "loyalists."

II

THE constitutional crisis through which the United Kingdom began to pass in 1909-10 found a changed Ireland. Though the process had been very gradual by which power passed from a privileged minority, for the most part of recently immigrated stock, to the majority, consisting of the older people and the older religion, yet the revolution was very complete. For one thing, security of tenure and the sense of ownership had worked a far-reaching improvement on the land ; prosperity was steadily increasing among the farmers, and the distinction between classes was less and less one of wealth. According to all prognostications of Unionist politicians, this should have meant the end of Irish discontent. In point of fact Ireland had at this time the good humour which comes of prosperity. Irishmen recognised a general manifestation of goodwill to them throughout the British democracy, and there was probably never a moment when Nationalist feeling was less anti-English. The idea of a settlement which gave

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self-government within the Empire was frankly accepted by all except a very few theorists ; and Ireland was not in a mood to stand out for an extreme definition of what self-government should mean. The formula of " a Parliament in Dublin with an executive responsible to it " satisfied all demands that had any backing among the electorate. But the demand for self-government was no less insistent than at any time since Parnell came to power. After 1910 every seat outside Ulster was held by a Home Ruler, with the exception of the two which represented Dublin University.

Moreover, outside of Ulster, the opposition to Home Rule had greatly weakened. The buying out of the landlords had meant much more than an economic or social reform ; it was the abandonment of a principle. England had deliberately disbanded its " garrison." The very idea of a right existing in, a duty imposed upon, the Protestant minority to hold down the country in the name of England, for England's interest and their own, had disappeared from consciousness. Many of the landlord class had left Ireland ; but a much larger proportion had remained in the country from habitual attachment. In remaining, they had remained also by tradition Unionists. As such, they were debarred from local power, because they were not chosen for any local representation.

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A Protestant landlord who became a Home Ruler had no difficulty in securing election to his county council; but these conversions were rare. Broadly speaking, the landed gentry, the professional classes, and the business men who were Protestants remained Unionists, and endeavoured to return a member to their liking in one or two divisions of Dublin. But all sting had gone out of their fight; and not a few men among them were at least anxious to see the experiment of self-government tried.

In Ulster, change had been in a very different sense. Opposition to Home Rule had in no way abated, but it had altered its character. Ulster no longer looked on itself as part of the garrison by which England held Ireland; that conception had been plainly discarded. Ulster had no intention of holding Ireland for England. It meant to hold Ulster for itself.

The old Protestant ascendancy, taken in relation to Ireland as a whole, had depended on British power. One by one the strongholds of that ascendancy had been surrendered: its privileged Church disestablished, its control of the corporations and local bodies destroyed; finally and chiefly, its power to enforce its will by eviction taken away. Without them, in a community which controlled local matters through the votes of a majority, ascendancy was gone. But in Ulster Protestant ascen-

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dancy remained because Protestants were in a majority, and they never let the Catholics forget it for a moment. They had behind them not only the tradition of power over the subjected race but the reality of it ; and like all races so situated they believed profoundly in the personal inferiority of those whom they were determined to hold in subjection. To Ulster the idea of being ruled by a Parliament in which Irish Catholics would have a majority was not only intolerable but preposterous. Yet it became clear, at least to the leading brains among Ulstermen, that the British electorate had no antipathy to Irish self-government, and that the result of concessions to South Africa was turning this negative attitude into a positive desire for further application of the same principle. Since the House of Lords could no longer block the way indefinitely, a new strategy was required.

Ulster had shown extraordinary wisdom in choosing for its leader one who was not an Ulsterman. Sir Edward Carson, Dublin-bred and of Galway parentage, had in him little, if any, of the traditional Ulster feeling about the Church of Rome. He was at all events sufficiently free from it to understand that in Great Britain of to-day a claim for ascendancy based directly upon a difference in creed would prejudice hopelessly the cause of those

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who made it. Throughout the campaign, therefore, he stated Ulster's case in terms of citizenship, basing it on the existence of irreconcilable national ideals. He represented Ulster as a community distinct in history, distinct in race, distinct in political aspirations, which men sought to force out of the larger unity to which by all ties of interest and sentiment it was bound, compelling it to accept "an inferior citizenship."

This language was artfully chosen to support a policy originally invented as a piece of dividing tactics. Mr. Sinclair, the ablest man whom Ulster produced during the Gladstonian conflict, had always held that if Home Rule became a near peril Ulster should demand to be treated as a separate entity. It is certain that he never contemplated a separate Ulster Parliament; but he knew how bitterly this claim would be resented by Ireland as a whole, and how insistence upon it would almost assuredly drive a wedge into the Nationalist ranks. It is not probable that Sir Edward Carson saw further ahead than this tactical advantage. But from the time when the proposal to separate Protestant Ulster from the rest of Ireland was put forward, the tactical success was so marked as to ensure persistence on this line. Ireland was infuriated; English opinion was divided; Ulster was jubilant.

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Yet clearly Ulster as a whole did not know in the least where it was going.

Ulster's cry was still "No Home Rule!" and when the Solemn League and Covenant was framed and signed in 1912, the Covenant bound all Ulstermen into a common resistance to any law that should seek to bring any part of Ulster under a Dublin Parliament. Ulster's will was to deny self-government to all Ireland; Ulster's positive claim was simply that all Ulster should remain still subject only to the Imperial Parliament and represented only at Westminster.

As the controversy proceeded, realities asserted themselves. It was plain for one thing that Ulster could not be regarded as a homogeneous Protestant Unionist community. The whole west of the province was in truth homogeneous with the rest of Ireland. Everywhere in the remaining six counties Catholics were a very large element in the whole; and a chance gave unreal emphasis to these facts. The constituencies were so distributed that a by-election gave the Nationalist party a clear majority of seats in the province. In the face of this, even Ulstermen felt that they had put their claim too high. It began to be a question of what they really could claim—and even more, of what they really did want.

As matters proceeded, Sir Edward Carson

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declared again and again that what they really wanted was time and experience of the working of Home Rule. Let Ulster stay under the Union. If Home Rule were the success that Nationalist Ireland anticipated, Ulster would gladly come in. This issue was narrowed when the Nationalist party accepted a provisional partition. Such counties as chose to vote themselves out should stay out for a period of five years. This raised two new questions: first, the provisional nature of the exclusion; secondly, the area to be excluded. Sir Edward Carson insisted that Ulster should never be forced in; and further, that Ulster should mean six counties—in two of which Nationalists had 54 per cent of the population.

These tactical developments need to be recalled, because they were stages in the evolution of a political idea which had as yet not received definition. There was as yet no mention of claiming the establishment by law of a separate Ulster state. That idea grew, not out of political debate, but from the realities of the situation.

In 1913 Ulster announced its intention to resist Home Rule by force of arms. The Ulster Volunteer Force was established. A great deal of money was subscribed. Nationalists from Ulster asserted in private as well as in public that this was all bluff, and that Sir Edward

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Carson was only a hypothetical rebel. It must be remembered that in 1913 war was regarded by vast masses of civilised mankind as a phenomenon which could scarcely produce itself anywhere in Europe north of the Balkans. We did not then understand with what disregard of consequences civilised men will fight for a political idea. We understand to-day that civil war would occur, certainly in South Africa, probably in Canada, possibly in Australia, if secession from the British Empire were proposed by a majority of the electoral representatives. The intention or the hope of the Ulstermen was to overthrow the Liberal Government by a mere threat of civil war. Yet there is no doubt that in the last resort they would have resisted the imposition of Home Rule upon them by all means available, including civil war. A survey of those means showed them the necessity of setting up an Ulster Government, in the first instance, for war purposes.

Resistance was to be by force of arms; but the resistance contemplated was not to the full military power of the British Empire. Behind the Ulster movement was a real political attachment to the British connection, and Ulster had succeeded in convincing a very large element in the old professional Army and Navy that the Home Rule policy was an attempt

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to sever Ulstermen from this old allegiance. The rebellion, therefore, was to be a rebellion in support of loyalty. But since it must be a rebellion not only against the Irish Government under which Ulster might be placed, but against the British Government responsible for so placing Ulster, there must be a constituted power which would take charge in Ulster for the Empire until the unsatisfactory government at Westminster had disappeared. The plan, then, was to set up a Provisional Government. But less able men than Sir Edward Carson must have known that a Government, wherever set up, tends to become permanent if it rests on popular support ; and must have known also that the driving force in Ulster was dislike of being governed from Dublin, not any passion for being governed from Westminster.

At all events, from this time forward a new conception began to enter into Irish politics : that of an Ulster with separate powers of legislature and administration. It was detested by Nationalists generally, because they felt that a small group of counties left under direct government from Westminster would soon come to consider that arrangement on its merits and would discard it as inconvenient ; whereas they believed, and still believe, that a separate self-governing Ulster would be permanently kept apart from the rest of Ireland by

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religious bigotry. Catholics disliked the idea of a new unit in which Catholics would be always a minority; the clergy in particular were vehement against the control of education by a Government of anti-Catholic bias. The liquor trade, which was largely in Catholic hands, feared confiscation. But above all there was a strong sentimental attachment to the idea of Ireland's unity. Nobody asked whether the unity existed in any other sense than that of geography, which bounded Ireland by the sea.

In short, the whole issue at this time was deeply tainted with unreality, and worse still, by the suspicion of unreality. Nationalists clamoured for the maintenance of unity; yet the most clamorous showed that they believed Protestant Ulstermen to be a race apart, permanently incapable of acting for the interest of Ireland as a whole. Ulster, as the controversy went on, vehemently demanded that a little group of Ulster counties should be governed as English shires; a solution of the difficulty which I do not believe that Ulster ever had any intention of accepting as a lasting arrangement. Nationalists suspected that Ulster's military preparations were bluff, and said so; Ulster suspected that Nationalist professions of willingness to accept self-government within the Empire were illusory, and said so.

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Nevertheless, on each side there was a genuine sincerity ; but so far as demonstration of it went Nationalist Ireland was at a disadvantage. If the game was to be played out according to the rules, Redmond must win. He was bound to act on the assumption that by the end of 1914 he would be forming an Irish Government. For that new departure he needed peace. Sir Edward Carson, with all the cards against him, was driven to desperate expedients—to a wrecking policy : if not to the use of force, to threats of it which should be unmistakable. His volunteers were a force intended to be used. The political effect of their existence was so great that it inevitably called out a counterpart. Yet the Irish Volunteers came into being without Redmond's initiative ; and Redmond when he was compelled by circumstances to adopt the movement deliberately tried to use it merely as an instrument of moral force. No one can with show of justice accuse him of lacking courage, either moral or physical ; but necessarily from his position he regarded civil war as the worst menace to Ireland.

It is probable, perhaps even certain, that he would not have countenanced even so far as he did the appeal to physical force had it not appeared that the rules of the game were to be disregarded. Accepting, as he had accepted,

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the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament and the full control of the Crown over Ireland—carrying Ireland with him as he had done in this acceptance—he was entitled to assume that the forces of the Crown would be fully at the disposal of the Government in carrying out the decrees of Parliament in Ireland. The incident at the Curragh in March 1914, when General Gough and a large number of officers resigned their commissions rather than take action which they believed to be hostile to Ulster, was taken as a sign that Government could not depend on the Army. A few days later the successful landing and distribution of a large consignment of arms at Larne, without let or hindrance from any official of the Government, confirmed this suspicion; it was inevitable that Redmond should then throw the full weight of his influence behind the Irish Volunteer movement, which had begun in the last weeks of 1913. In July, the landing of arms for these Volunteers was opposed by troops between Howth and Dublin; and the troops also, under provocation but in no danger, fired on an unarmed crowd in the city.

The inevitable effect of these happenings was to produce in Nationalist Ireland an angry sense of injustice. Redmond, whose eyes were always on the future, had been strongly opposed to any measures of repression against

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Ulster which would provide Ulster with martyrs ; he knew from Ireland's own history the lasting effect of a sentiment so created. But he expected that Government would enforce loyalty on its agents ; and he, like every other Irishman, felt in his bones all that was implied in the excessive zeal of police officials when confronted in Dublin with the like of what had been passing unimpeded in the North.

Finally, the undisciplined action of the troops, who fired without order on an unarmed crowd, showed how much reality there was in the fear that the Army had come to take sides in a political struggle—which was then purely a struggle between two rival constitutional policies. The only serious rival to the policy which sought to maintain the legislative Union unimpaired was the policy which aimed at establishing in Ireland a form of government analogous to what the oversea dominions possessed. No Nationalist would have declared a willingness to accept a status less in dignity than that to which these new commonwealths had attained. But before the war Ireland, as a whole, did not realise how far the concession of military control to these outlying states had gone ; and there was no ambition for a separate military organisation. Nor, again, was their complete fiscal independence envied. Ireland's

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accepted political leaders, perhaps from their feeling for Gladstone and his party, perhaps from their equally strong feeling against Chamberlain, believed in Free Trade. The system of taxation in force was not burdensome; and industrial Ulster had thriven so greatly under it that nowhere in Ireland was financial hardship felt. Such recognition of separate dignity as is now conveyed by membership of the League of Nations was not then dreamed of. Ireland's acceptance of freedom within the Empire was perhaps undefined; but it was willing and it was all but universal.

Nevertheless, the facts of the twelvemonth before the war had brought new questions into view, and a new section of the community into considerable power. The challenge to a counter-display of force to Ulster's arming had been welcome to the great mass of young Irishmen who had little influence and consequently little interest in the purely constitutional movement. From the moment when the Irish Volunteers came into being, men began to count in Irish life who had counted for nothing before. The movement had come very largely from the section which was more interested in the Gaelic revival than the parliamentary campaign: it was first advocated effectively in the organ of the Gaelic League, and it was advocated by Professor Eóin

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MacNeill, vice-president of the League. It had already taken strong hold before the Curragh incident and the Larne gun-running; and though Redmond's adhesion instantly flooded the ranks with men fully prepared to follow Redmond's leading, yet the directing committees were largely manned by young men who owed to no such allegiance.

III

IN a very few weeks after he had identified himself with the Volunteer movement Redmond became aware that he possessed no such control over its organisation as Sir Edward Carson could exercise over that of Ulster ; and when by a violent exercise of authority he insisted that the governing committee should be so reconstituted as to give him this control, the men whom he nominated to it, who had for the most part always been considered as extreme Nationalists, found themselves in the presence of a new Ireland. There was discord, and inevitably. To one section, the Volunteers were in reality a demonstration called out to strengthen the parliamentary action. To the other, they were a separate means of action, much more efficacious than those of constitutionalism. What might have been the evolution without war's advent it is useless to speculate ; but war came. Redmond saw in it a hope of making friends with Ulster by joining in a common struggle ; he saw also

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a chance of winning for Ireland by voluntary separate action an admitted place among the free nations within the Imperial Commonwealth. Instinctively he followed the same line of statesmanship as Botha and Smuts ; but unhappily he had not, like them, power to give effect to his statesmanship.

Unlike them, however, he did not at the outset find himself thwarted by violent action of a separatist party. There was not in Ireland in 1914 a separatist element strong enough to take any important part. Yet the cleavage which was bound to produce itself came early. Ulster, which might by a cordial gesture have transformed the situation, preferred to repudiate Redmond's proposal of co-operation, and to belittle alike the courage of his invitation and the material response to it. Government spent six weeks in deciding what they should do in regard to the Home Rule Bill, and then decided to give Ireland a post-dated cheque for a limited freedom, reserving an undefined power to modify the Act in Ulster's interest. Those who had always followed Redmond's guidance still followed it ; but enthusiasm in their action was scarcely to be looked for. Those who had never followed him told Ireland that he had once more allowed Ireland to be duped and cheated. An immediate question arose as to how the Volunteer

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organisations should stand in relation to the War Office. Ulster once more set an example and decided that its Volunteer Force should continue under the control solely of its own authority. But advice was addressed to its ranks that such as could should join the army, and especially should join the Ulster Division, which was officially recognised from the first week of the war, and which, from the opening of its enlistment, was hailed as a demonstration against Home Rule. In face of this, it was inconceivable that Redmond should ask the Irish Volunteers to put themselves as a force at the disposal of the War Office. But from the moment of the Home Rule Act's passing he addressed to them the same appeal as had been made to the Ulstermen. Five weeks earlier, four weeks, three weeks, one week, that appeal would have been more effective : every day had added to the sense that the British Government was far indeed from demonstrating in Ireland its devotion to the cause of the small nations. Now, when Redmond called for recruits, backed by Mr. Asquith's presence in Dublin, a split came. Nine out of every ten among the Enrolled Volunteers adhered to Redmond ; yet the effective beginning of the present Irish situation dates from September 1914, when a section, numbering perhaps ten thousand young men, formally broke away

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from Redmond's leadership, and repudiated his contention that the war was Ireland's war.

Ireland's true position, as defined by the leaders of this opinion, was one of general neutrality. But it was plain that in time of war a nation which is free to hold itself neutral is free to take what other action it chooses. This was the first definite setting up of the separatist standard. It was a return to a propaganda older and far more influential than that of Sinn Féin.

Sinn Féin policy had based itself on the Declaration in 1783 of Ireland's independence as a separate kingdom hereditary to the British Crown. Its avowed aim had been restoration of Grattan's parliament, with revisions most necessary to make it in any way acceptable. The methods by which this was to be attained were those of passive resistance; the parliamentary movement was discarded as useless, but not more so than the use of physical force.

None of this had touched the Irish imagination. But men were still living who had taken part in a movement which had powerfully swayed Ireland's imagination, and had left potent memories. Many, probably most, of the old Fenians of the sixties had fallen into line behind Parnell; yet there were exceptions, like

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old Thomas Clarke in Dublin, born conspirators, who kept the lamp of rebel organisation always, if obscurely, alight. The Irish Republican Brotherhood had never ceased to exist, and Ulster's recourse to arms had made new stirrings in it, had gained it new recruits—such as was Patrick Pearse. From August 1914 onward men who had never abandoned this dream of winning Ireland's freedom by the sword saw for the first time in their lives a moment when England's military strength was fully and desperately engaged. The old saying that England's need was Ireland's opportunity could not but be recalled.

Yet there was never a time when Ireland was so willing to construe this maxim as Redmond desired: to secure her freedom by services of goodwill in an emergency. When the Scottish Borderers left the barracks to which they had been confined since they fired on the Dublin crowd after the Howth gun-running, they marched to the quays on their road to France through a Dublin crowd that cheered them. It was a genuine demonstration of amnesty and of desire for a new departure. That demonstration was completely lost on the War Office. Redmond, knowing his country, appealed for recognition of the National Volunteers as a home defence force. Lord Kitchener and the War Office had one

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✓ steady view, which was that to arm Irish Nationalists was to arm enemies. Such a belief in course of time brings about its own fulfilment. In a hundred petty ways, and in some that were not petty, a damper was put on the feeling for the Allied cause then prevalent in Ireland. Mr. Lloyd George afterwards spoke of the "stupidity, amounting almost to malignity," which had marked the dealings with the effort to raise Irish units for the struggle.

All this blundering, whether stupid or malign, was sedulously exploited by those who held that the duty of Irishmen was to remain in Ireland and to take whatever means seemed best to achieve Ireland's freedom. The papers in which this propaganda was conducted were suppressed, but a swarm of other publications took their place. And as the nature of modern war revealed itself, it became more and more easy to persuade Irishmen, or any other men, against taking a part in it. Moreover, the farming community, immensely the most important element in Ireland, saw for the first time a prospect of large profits in their own industry. Disaffection to the once dominant parliamentary party grew; they no longer attributed their prosperity in any sense to Redmond and his colleagues in the parliamentary movement.

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Whether they agreed with Sinn Féin or no, the advice to stay in Ireland was advice which accorded well with their interests and inclinations.

Still, in all this there was no positive prompting to rebel action. So far as the mass of agricultural Ireland was concerned, the change in them meant rather an abandonment of their old political allegiance than the adoption of a new one. They were well off. As war profits increased, one fear haunted them—the menace of conscription, which to the farmer meant not only personal danger but loss of the labour by which he was accumulating profits. They did not find it easy to believe that Redmond, with his enthusiasm for the war and his constant appeal for men, was the safe guardian of their assurance against enforced service. This feeling also inclined them to those who declared for Ireland's right to be neutral.

Yet there were those among the young men of Ireland who felt it as a stigma on Ireland's name for courage that when all the nations on the Continent were in a grapple for freedom, Ireland as Ireland should take no part; and as the balance swung, Ireland's opportunity seemed more and more real. Roger Casement, whose personality assured his prestige wherever he went, was not widely known in Ireland, but

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he had deeply impressed those who met him ; his knowledge of European politics was indisputable ; and he urged action in concert with Germany. Meantime, the section of the Irish Volunteers which had broken away from Redmond, and which preserved most of the original nucleus of the movement, continued active in preparation. The Liberal Government were inevitably hampered in dealing with these activities by the precedents which they had created in Ulster. Redmond, too sanguine in many ways, did not regard the dissident Volunteers as a serious danger ; he certainly thought that any violent action of the Government directed against them would be a mistake ; he held, and held rightly, that the way to render this group innocuous was to give increasing recognition to his own Volunteers as a force on which England was willing to rely for the defence of Ireland. Only the negative side of his policy was followed : nothing was done for Redmond's Volunteers or against the others. For the majority, who, following his lead, were determined to support the Allied cause, there was no incentive to exertion in Ireland. The adventurous spirits left their ranks, enlisting to the number of some thirty thousand ; the remainder ceased to have any active being. The only Volunteers who pursued their training ardently were those whose training was

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deliberately directed to an attack on English power in Ireland.

Yet very few people in Ireland believed that such an attack was seriously contemplated. We know now that Casement had hopes of a large movement in Ireland, to be launched upon the landing of a German expedition; and we may at least infer that Germany regarded the probable loss of such an expedition as a risk not worth the taking. If there was to be no rebellion till a German force landed, Ireland's peace was secure, since most of those who contemplated rebellion dismissed the idea of it without foreign aid. What actually happened could not have happened but for the existence in Ireland of two groups unlike in quality to the rest of the country.

One of these had its origin in events of recent date; and it was a new thing in Ireland. This was the "Citizen Army" in Dublin.

The revolution which had so greatly benefited the Irish farming class had not made the world better for Labour in Ireland. Outside of industrial Ulster, Labour in Ireland had scarcely reached consciousness of itself as a separate element, at the time when an English Labour Party became a potent factor in British politics. In Ulster the struggle against Home Rule had assumed so much of a sectarian character that fusion of Protestant and

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Catholic for any common political purpose was very difficult to accomplish: and many observers have declared that the chief reason why industrial magnates in Belfast threw so much zeal into that struggle was that, employing Catholics and Protestants by thousands, it suited them to keep these elements divided. However that be, divergence on Home Rule in the ranks of Labour prevented the Belfast area from becoming what it might naturally have been, the focus of a strong movement to improve the conditions of labour all over Ireland. Such a movement was sorely needed; yet less badly in Belfast than outside it. Wages in the shipyards were good. Wages in the linen trade were miserably low. Yet at least the municipal authorities in Belfast had been able to provide housing, such as it was, at a moderate cost to the wage-earner. In Dublin housing conditions were disgraceful, and the worst tenement dwellings fetched a very high rent. Wages were far below the British standard, rent much above it. There was everywhere a vast bog of unorganised labour, underpaid because it was inefficient, and inefficient because it had been so long underpaid.

In the year immediately preceding the war, a remarkable man, Mr. James Larkin, possessing the gift of personal magnetism, succeeded in bringing agricultural labour and other classes

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of the worst-paid workers into an organisation called the Transport Workers Union; and through it he effected marked rises in wages. Employers in Dublin grew seriously alarmed, and in the autumn of 1913 a great fight developed between Capital and Labour. It lasted nearly six months, and was fought to the bitter end. Labour's resistance was scotched, not settled. Fierce embers of revolt lay smouldering among the ranks driven to accept abject defeat. Moreover, during the conflict Labour came to believe that parliamentary Nationalism stood in social politics for opposition to all the claims of the working-man. There was, outside of Ulster, no Tory Unionist party against which Labour's hostility could be directed: it turned against the party which was in power, and which was indeed essentially bourgeois on all questions other than those connected with the land.

→ This revolt would have found constitutional expression in a self-governing Ireland; but in the Ireland of 1913 it took a special form. Labour in Dublin was the first element which copied the Ulster methods. Larkin called for the formation of a Citizen Army, which should be Labour's counterpart to the army of Sir Edward Carson. When a few weeks later the Irish Volunteers came into being, the two forces had little fellowship. But since Labour

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in Dublin was no less Nationalist than any other part of the community, the Citizen Army also wrote Irish Freedom at the head of its list of purposes. Larkin left Ireland, but the brain of the movement remained. James Connolly, who, lacking Larkin's gift for leadership, yet had a stronger personality and intelligence, directed their paper, *The Irish Worker*; it was hostile to all the conceptions of old-fashioned Nationalism, and inevitably hostile to Redmond's policy in relation to recruiting. Moreover, the war, which brought prosperity to agricultural Ireland, meant misery for Dublin. There was no appreciable increase in employment, no rise of wages adequate to the rise of prices. The Citizen Army remained a separate organisation, and an organisation of desperate men; men feeling that they had nothing to lose and eager to satisfy their long anger.

The second group was very different. At its head, perhaps the inspirer of its ideals, was Patrick Pearse, who for many years was editor of the Gaelic League's paper, and then set up a school at which education was conducted so far as possible in Irish. To this man and to his votaries the shedding of blood was a thing actually desirable; but the desire was not to inflict injury, but to consummate a sacrifice. Not that Irishmen should kill, but that Irishmen should die, in open fight for Ireland,

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seemed to Pearse a supreme object. He aspired to the fate which overtook him. Never a Sinn Féiner in the proper sense, never attracted by Mr. Griffiths' Hungarian policy, he was vehemently repelled by the element of materialism which to his mind had pervaded Irish Nationalism. He saw Irish leaders coming back time after time and saying, "We have not got you Home Rule—not yet; but we have got you a new Land Act; land purchase will go quicker; we have got security for the town tenants in their holdings; we have got Old Age Pensions for the poor; we have prevented, or we have tried to prevent, a rise in the taxation on tobacco and porter." It seemed to Pearse that too little was being asked of Irishmen; that they were paid for being Nationalists. The movement which had his affection was that of the old Fenians, with its single and simple object of an Irish Republic achieved by clean fight. He knew the Fenians' failure; but he knew also that the men who had fallen in that effort were canonised in Irish memory; and he believed that the time had come to appeal again to the true spirit of the race. Whether success in a rising might be hoped for on military grounds was negligible to him: he held that a rising in Ireland must inevitably produce a moral revolution, a regeneration of the Irish people.

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When, at the last moment, the heads of the Volunteer organisation decided to call off the insurrection which had been planned for Easter, April 1916, on the ground that German support would not be forthcoming, a section in Dublin decided to rise in defiance of their orders. Whether Pearse or Connolly was responsible for this decision, is uncertain; it seems certain that both men, with their immediate backing, wanted the issue forced.

The rising took all Ireland by surprise; it shocked Ireland as a wanton folly. These feelings were much more widely spread than the admiration which was however felt by thousands, especially of the young men, who in a time of general war desired their adventure of war, but would not have it on England's terms. But, broadly speaking, Ireland was against the rising. When it broke out there were scarcely a thousand English soldiers in Ireland; the defence of the country was in the hands of Irish troops, and the first casualties fell on Irish Nationalists.

X In a military sense the attack had no importance. In a political sense it might have been the deathblow to separatism. But by the handling of it, England really made the separatist element dominant in Ireland.

I have been told by one who was present that when Redmond got the news he went at once

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to Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister, and came back saying that all was right ; there would be only one execution, if even one. In other words, the rebellion would be handled as Botha handled it in South Africa, where only one man was executed, and he a soldier who had changed sides in an action. The rest were punished with limited periods of imprisonment, and some, even the most important, dismissed with silent contempt. England preferred to make martyrs : her statesmen called this making an example. Fifteen men in all were executed, but the executions were spread over weeks ; no detail of the trials was published. Ireland was treated as if Ireland had no concern or voice in the matter. And the Ministry which presided over their actions included Sir Edward Carson and his chief English backers in projected rebellion. Feeling in Ireland swung fiercely round. When March 1916 ended, Ireland was scarcely touched by anti-British feeling. When May began, a wave of it was in motion, and by June it had swept over the country. Condemnation, however, was mainly directed to the Government. The constitutional party was not as yet fully involved in the reaction. That was to come.

IV

THE events which followed Easter week 1916 once more justified the Irish view that violent illegal action is the only effective means of attracting England's attention. Ireland had been quietly dismissed from the Ministerial mind until this sudden outburst. Englishmen, to do them justice, appeared willing to realise that if rebellion had been tolerated in the North it was not surprising that men in the South also should try what they could do. The Coalition decided that something should be attempted to meet Ireland's claim. When Redmond and his party agreed that Home Rule's operation should be postponed till after peace had been declared, no one except Lord Kitchener expected a prolonged war. Now, in June 1916, the Act was far on in its second year of suspended activity. Negotiations were set on foot ; and Mr. Lloyd George was appointed by Mr. Asquith to be the negotiator. The agreement come to was that the Act should immediately be brought into operation, but that no elections should be held.

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The existing body of Irish Members should form the first Irish Parliament and carry on administration till the close of the war. Six Ulster counties were to be excluded, and to be governed as before from Westminster. Irish representation at Westminster was to remain at its full strength during the provisional period. Redmond and Sir Edward Carson agreed to submit these proposals to their supporters. It was generally believed that the plan might possibly be agreed to by Ulster Unionists, but would certainly be rejected by Ulster Nationalists.

Two meetings were held in Belfast. The Unionists agreed to the proposals as explained by their leader. The Nationalist meeting was a great affair, and strong opposition had been organised by the opponents at any price of partition. Mr. Devlin's personal ascendancy and gift of speech carried a large majority for acceptance. Nationalists of the six counties decided that they would not stand in the way of immediate self-government for the remaining twenty-six. Moreover, it was explained to them that the exclusion was only temporary and provisional. Redmond had insisted that the terms of agreement should be reduced to writing and should be submitted in identical form to both bodies in Ireland. His construction of them was that at the end of the war the six

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counties would automatically come under the Dublin Parliament, unless the Imperial Parliament should pass a special Act excepting them. The Parliament which should decide this was to be a Parliament in which Ireland would still have a hundred members.

When acceptance of the proposals was secured in Belfast, there was a general belief that the measure would operate. But it soon became apparent that the Cabinet was not prepared to endorse what Mr. Lloyd George, with Mr. Asquith's concurrence, had arranged. The clause by which Ireland was to have a disproportionate number of members at Westminster until such time as all Ireland came under central Parliament was repudiated. This proviso was regarded by Nationalist leaders as the practical guarantee for the temporary character of exclusion. Further than this, it became apparent that Sir Edward Carson held that under the agreement the excluded counties were to remain excluded unless and until Parliament should specially enact their inclusion; and also that Mr. Asquith had accepted Sir Edward Carson's reading of this clause.

Thus the agreement broke down finally in open debate amid violent denunciations of bad faith. Already in Ireland there was a storm in the press against the Nationalist leaders for

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even tolerating the suggestion of "the mutilation of Ireland." Now it appeared that they had been tricked into at least provisional acceptance of an arrangement involving partition, on the faith of a covenant which could not be enforced. They were pilloried as dupes. From that time forward the parliamentary party ceased to have any control of the situation in Ireland. Its following remained, by no means as yet converted to any other policy; but that following was now a leaderless mass. Yet men with the fear of conscription hourly before them were not likely to remain leaderless.

In February 1917 Sinn Féin won its first parliamentary election, returning in North Roscommon Count Plunkett, father of one of the young poets who had been executed along with Pearse. Another election in Longford, where Sinn Féin was never supposed to have a strong hold, returned another Sinn Féiner, who had no reflected prestige of martyrdom to help him. Still another result in Kilkenny City confirmed the impression that the country had gone Sinn Féin *en masse*.

Yet opinion was uncertain; for by a tragic irony Redmond's war policy had begun to produce the consequences for which he hoped—consequences from which a great reconciliation might have flowed, if only Ireland had not decided to change horses while crossing the stream.

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The Irish divisions in France did not come conspicuously into notice till the battles of the Somme. They distinguished themselves at first separately, the Ulstermen on July 1, 1916, just after the negotiations had been finally broken down at Westminster. In September the Sixteenth Division went through where others had failed, and recognition of Irish valour was not scantied by the English public. In that month the two divisions were put to hold side by side a section of the line opposite Wytschaete and Messines. Fraternisation resulted. In June 1917 the brilliant success in which Ulstermen and Nationalists made the centre of a victorious advance took a special significance from the death of Redmond's gallant brother. This was the moment when Ulster was most reconcilable, and attempt was made to utilise it. The Irish Convention was set up—on a suggestion which came from Redmond. It was an attempt to find a solution through the general goodwill of Irishmen. Redmond's desire was, so far as possible, to eliminate from it all trace of party associations; and he himself in it refused persistently to act as a party leader. He behaved as one who had received dismissal by the verdict of the country; and, indeed, that verdict had just been cruelly emphasised.

After the rebellion more than a thousand

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Irishmen were interned as political prisoners at Frongoch, in Wales. This became an admirable academy of militant Sinn Féin. In it those whom English rule selected as the locally leading spirits were brought together and lived in the closest daily intimacy and consultation. Naturally, in such an assemblage, personalities asserted themselves. When, as part of the programme of general reconciliation with which the Convention was launched, these men were liberated, a young Irishman, of whom very few in Ireland had heard before, was recognised as their leader. Mr. de Valera was immediately selected to contest the seat in Clare which Willy Redmond's death had left vacant. John Redmond's supporter was defeated by an overwhelming majority. ✓

The Convention showed that among average normal Irishmen of varying opinions and associations there was everywhere strong sense of the need for a settlement, a certain movement of friendliness, and a general acceptance of the principle that Ireland must be self-governing; though none of the Unionists would admit that self-government was practically a better plan than legislative Union. What overshadowed the whole proceedings was the idea of partition. It was never discussed as a policy. Everyone agreed to exclude it as having been finally rejected.

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But, as a consequence, whatever could by any stretch of language be described as partition was quickly thrust aside. On this ground were discarded proposals to give Ulster special powers whether of initiating or rejecting legislation in reference to Ulster's own area. Generally, Nationalists felt that Ulstermen kept at the back of their minds the proposal of a separate committee or body of some sort, with at all events a limited control over Ulster's affairs. Even this was regarded as impossible of acceptance by Nationalists. "The country would never stand it."

Debate was mainly occupied with the taxing power. Ulster's objection to Home Rule, in so far as it was not based on the impossibility of putting Ulster Protestants under a Parliament in which Catholics would have the majority, revealed itself as one concerning taxation. At this moment Ulstermen had begun to recognise that wealth actually existed outside of Ulster ; but Ulster was still enormously impressed with the strength and solidity of its own financial position, and of its general forwardness as compared with the backwardness of the rest of the country. Fear was indicated that Ulster's taxes would be made a milch cow to feed schemes of social and industrial development in those backward regions. The governing assumption was that Ulster would remain permanently more

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solvent than the Catholic counties. Over and above this was the argument repeatedly enforced, that Irish policy, as outlined by the most representative minds in Southern Ireland, contemplated protection against English competition ; that any difference in the indirect taxation of Great Britain involved a tariff barrier and customs frontier ; and that any such arrangement would be ruinous to Ulster's commerce. It was held essential to Ulster's prosperity that there should be unfettered freedom of exchange between the two countries ; Ulstermen were not prepared to put their business interests at the mercy of an Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer who might be more zealous to bolster up nascent industries in the South and West than to safeguard those existing in the Protestant North.

Between this view and that of the Nationalist majority, which contended that a Parliament must be the sole taxing authority in its own area, there seemed to be no common meeting ground ; yet a section in the Convention, representing the old landlord interest in the South and the wealthy Protestant business and professional community, set itself to the task of making a bridge. Lord Midleton proposed a scheme which contemplated an Irish Parliament with powers limited only by the exclusion of what belongs to naval and military administra-

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tion and to the Foreign Office. But the fixing of customs duties was from his point of view an affair touching the sphere of foreign relations, since such taxes may be the subject of treaties. Discussion was behind closed doors; but the controversy became public. Ulster's spokesmen made it clear that they would not accept the proposed compromise. It became then a question whether Nationalists ought to waive their view for complete fiscal autonomy, in order to secure agreement with a large and powerful body of Irishmen from whom they had been politically estranged in the past. One member of the Convention who vehemently opposed this compromise was the owner of an influential newspaper, and a press campaign began in which control over customs and excise was represented as a vital and essential part of self-government. Redmond was of the other opinion. He saw in Lord Midleton's overtures the possibility of forming a new and wider constitutional party for self-government within the Empire. At the crisis of a too prolonged effort to secure agreement, Redmond died, and Nationalists in the Convention expressed divided opinions in their Report. No measure of agreement in detail was reached which could not have been as well obtained at Christmas. When Government received the Convention's findings the German offensive of March 1918

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was in full career. Mr. Lloyd George wanted to raise every possible man in England ; he felt that, politically speaking, this would not be done while Ireland remained exempt. What the consequence might be in Ireland he probably did not seriously consider. Conscription for Ireland was introduced and passed against the vote of all Nationalist Members.

The effect was instant. During the sittings of the Convention, separatist propaganda had experienced a check : three by-elections had taken place, and in all three the supporter of Redmond's policy had been returned. Ireland was still ready to accept anything that it considered a fair compromise ; though to the demand that there should be no partition was now added the claim that any measure must give full control of customs and excise, which the Act of 1914 had not given. There was still a belief and a hope that such a measure might be obtained by constitutional means from Parliament. But now, when conscription was carried against the vote of four-fifths of Ireland's representatives, all trust in the old methods disappeared. Nationalist leaders and Sinn Féin leaders joined in a Committee of Defence, which sat daily to concert measures for resistance. It was decided that these should include "whatever means might seem most efficacious." The Catholic hierarchy and

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their clergy came in full array into this movement. It was universal, it was confined to the soil of Ireland, it was a passive resistance, for no blow was struck ; and it won. Conscription was never enforced. No greater apparent victory for the Sinn Féin policy could have been conceived. That was the end of the constitutional movement.

Events, however, did not develop along the lines anticipated by leaders of Sinn Féin. The war took dramatically a sudden turn : Germany collapsed ; and English Ministers went triumphantly to the electorate. But Mr. Lloyd George's electoral victory was not so remarkable as Mr. de Valera's. Sinn Féin, which at no previous general election had won a seat, now secured all the Nationalist constituencies except half a dozen in Ulster, where a contest was avoided by agreement, and two others where the candidate had a peculiar hold : Captain Redmond retained his father's seat in Waterford ; Mr. Devlin once more won in West Belfast.

The policy for which Sinn Féin candidates stood was that of claiming a separate Irish Republic, a right of national self-determination. Yet, so far as it is possible to construe the minds of voters, a very small percentage voted with the hope of realising this object, and not a greatly larger proportion really desired to

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attain it. The Irish people, beyond all doubt, wanted to change the character of their representation. This must have been known and felt by the old parliamentary party, since in twenty-six seats no opposition was offered to the Sinn Féin candidate. Many Nationalists held that since the policy pursued for so long had failed of its object, Sinn Féin ought to have the field to its own methods. Where contests took place the result emphasised the country's view. Mr. de Valera defeated Mr. Dillon, who had succeeded Mr. Redmond as leader of the party, in the constituency which for more than thirty years had been proud of its famous representative.

But a change of methods and of persons does not imply a complete change of object, and it is certain that the vast majority of Irish electors had no conception of what was implied in the demand for separation. They were all extremely conversant with the principle that governs bargaining—to ask more than you mean to take ; and since they assuredly wanted to get as much as possible they asked for the maximum. It was represented to them that the case of Ireland must necessarily come before the Peace Conference, and the demand was framed with a view to making an impression on that as yet nebulous body. However constituted, the Conference must consider, and must consider

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in view of recent pronouncements, the claim of many small nationalities. It was natural that Ireland should formulate its claim to national rights in the most unmistakable manner. But not one in a thousand of the Irish electorate realised that they were making such a claim as no great Power had ever submitted to except after defeat in war. Still less did those who voted for a Republican candidate stop to consider what the effect of such a vote would be upon the unity of Ireland. Ulster, of course, declared that this sudden development revealed the truth of Ulster's persistent contention—that Home Rule was only desired as a stepping-stone to complete separation; and that the question for every Protestant Ulsterman was one of retaining or forfeiting his birthright as a British subject. In support of this contention they pointed to the compact reached among Ulster Catholics, by which those seats in Ulster which a Catholic might hope to win were apportioned equally between Sinn Féin and the Nationalists. This proved, to Ulster's satisfaction, that it was merely a choice between alternative roads to the same end.

It should be added that Sinn Féin had captured almost in its entirety the fund raised and the organisation created to fight conscription. Ireland had subscribed for this as Ireland had never subscribed before. Ready money had

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never been so plentiful ; the economic gain for farmers in retaining all possible labour at a time of war prices was so great as to make subscription an investment ; and lastly, it was an insurance to each subscriber against being forced into peril and hardship for a cause which, by the very fact that Ireland was compelled against Ireland's will, was not that of Ireland's freedom. The organisation for resistance found a natural nucleus in the Volunteers, and the emergency authorised the Volunteers for the first time to act almost as an accredited police, with power to compel the reluctant. Thus, even before its electoral triumph Sinn Féin controlled resources in money and organisation in much greater measure than any popular movement of which there was living memory. After the election, its right as well as its power was stronger and more clear.

V

TRIUMPH at the election brought with it the difficulties of coming into power. Results of the victory had to be shown ; and when the decision was taken to constitute the Irish Members into an Irish Parliament — Dáil Eireann — with a ministry responsible to it, people were inclined to laugh.

The mere fact that the British Government did not interfere gave unreality to the whole proceeding. Mr. de Valera, as the elected President, had an air of comic opera. Dáil Eireann sat, journalists from all over the world found its sessions of interest ; but everybody wondered sceptically as to what would come out of its debates. For the first six months of 1919 both sides were marking time. Moreover, during this period there was widespread expectation in Ireland that the evident danger in which the country stood might be conjured away by the peaceful intervention of a body whose authority could not be disregarded. The Peace Conference was in session. It seemed to many, who had neither part nor lot in Sinn Féin,

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that Great Britain could well afford to refer this difficulty within her own dominions to the arbitrament of an assembly in which British influence was so strong ; and America's presence at the Conference made it certain that no party in Nationalist Ireland could refuse to accept the Conference as arbitrator. A large body of Irish officers, including the General who commanded the Sixteenth Division, appealed to the British Government to take this way. General Gough, who had headed the resignations of officers at the Curragh in 1914, was now found on the side of those Irish Nationalists who had served under his command in France, and who asked for an application in their own country of the principles for which they had been fighting overseas.

Expectation of some peaceful settlement was still in the mind of all men. There was little grave crime ; though certain tragedies had made it plain that the community would not join in any effort to arrest or detect those who killed agents of the Government. But passive resistance was the order of the day, and the main immediate issue was to secure the release of a large number of Irishmen who had been interned since the early summer of 1918 on suspicion of complicity in a " German plot " — of whose existence no very satisfactory proof has yet been divulged. At all events, in March

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1919, the interned men were released as a message of goodwill for St. Patrick's Day; yet not till after one of the most popular among them, Mr. Pierce McCann, recently elected Member for Tipperary, had died in his confinement, and become a new martyr. Mr. de Valera, who had anticipated the Government action by a dramatic escape from prison, now returned to Ireland. He was to have entered Dublin in state as President, but the Crown forbade this demonstration; and necessary acquiescence in the order added to the sense of unreality. The attitude of the Irish Republican Government was defined as being "that of the Belgian Government towards the German army of occupation, as defined by Cardinal Mercier." "We can endure coercion," said Mr. de Valera. "What we cannot endure is that it might appear to the world that we are governed with the consent of the Irish people." This was a correct attitude in which to go before the Peace Conference. Meantime, the Sinn Féin organisation was instructed to become "a sort of civil army to carry out the decisions of Dáil Eireann's Cabinet." Part of the work of this civil army was to levy a sort of taxation. Appeal was made to Ireland for a quarter of a million. The Irish parliamentary party used to think they did well in raising ten thousand pounds within the year for their

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campaign funds. Evidently an organisation financed on this new scale was to be a very different affair. But the money came in. Old constitutionalists said that it came in under duress, and probably to some extent they were right. Yet it was a moment of genuine idealisms and of high hopes. Besides, money was plentiful, and the farming class, freed from the menace of conscription, were grateful to those to whom they attributed their deliverance. ✓

Hopes were based on the good offices of America. Irish American delegates, one of whom, Mr. Frank Walsh, had played a prominent part in war administration, came to Ireland, and came with the avowed purpose of backing Ireland's claim to be heard at the Peace Conference. They were treated to what was then exceptional, a display of armed force in the Dublin streets, when Government attempted to arrest a wanted man in the reception arranged at the Mansion House for these envoys.

For there were by this time many men "on the run." Government, urged to display its authority by force, was making arrests, and Mr. de Valera's "civil army" began to operate in rescue parties, carried out with a reckless indifference to life. The shooting of policemen became frequent, and in every case policemen ✓

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were shot with impunity. These deeds were denounced by Catholic priests and bishops, but no one was found to take the part of giving evidence, or of attempting to arrest the assailants. Two factors operated to produce this abstinence. First, and perhaps strongest, was the dread of being regarded as an informer. A century of government without the consent of the governed had bred throughout Ireland a general disposition to regard the law in certain phases as the common enemy. Nobody would inform. Over and above this was the well-founded conviction that the informer's life would not be worth many hours' purchase.

Yet, as the list of assassinations lengthened, men felt the need for finding a justification. It was explained that policemen were not merely the agents of an alien Government which was holding down Ireland by force; they were traitors to their country who joined actively in this work. What can you do with a spy but shoot him? And what is a policeman but a spy? That was the train of reasoning often used in speech by men who would in practice have recoiled from these deeds.

It was true that policemen had in previous times undertaken their work and carried it out without incurring any stigma of treason to their country. It was even true that one of the principal reasons why Government dared not

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proceed to enforce the Compulsory Service Act was that the police force were ready to break. Irish police took the same view as Irish people—that Ireland was by law entitled to a Parliament, and that none but an Irish Parliament could rightfully impose this supreme blood tax on Ireland. Yet from the standpoint of idealists everything was changed since December 1918. There was now an Irish Republic in being. Any Irishman who accepted any other authority in Ireland, except in so far as force constrained him, was a traitor to the Irish Republic. And so each new killing elicited new justification. There were those, too, who asked no excuse, and ballads celebrated these exploits. Meanwhile, the proof of impunity led to increased boldness; and in addition to the attacks upon police an organised system of raiding for arms spread over all the provinces. The difficulty of governing a whole country against its will to make government impossible grew every day more apparent. Government only succeeded in striking down those forms of Sinn Féin activity which were morally least assailable. Dáil Eireann had issued a somewhat pretentious industrial programme, and established a Commission to inquire into the possibility of developing Ireland's resources. This Commission was declared illegal: meetings of County Councils

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summoned to confer with its members on the utilisation of peat and the harnessing of water power were prohibited. This naturally led to the conclusion that the British Government would neither do the work of civilised government in Ireland nor let anyone else do it.

Matters were brought to a head in August 1919 by a singularly audacious stroke of violence. In Fermoy, where there was a garrison of some two thousand troops, a small party of soldiers going to the Methodist church were attacked by a body about equal in numbers who carried revolvers. The soldiers, who had their rifles but no ammunition, were overpowered and disarmed; the attackers drove off with their booty in three motor-cars. Elaborate arrangements had been made to block the roads against pursuit by felling trees across them. The whole countryside was more or less in the secret, and Government could know nothing. One soldier had been shot dead in the affray. At an inquest the jury refused to find a verdict of murder. Troops turned out that night and wrecked the town in revenge, taking this verdict for a manifestation of sympathy.

In September Government took the step of proclaiming Sinn Féin an illegal association in certain specified counties. They went further, and declared Dáil Eireann an illegal assembly. Revolution was thus driven completely under-

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ground ; Ireland was thrown entirely into the hands of the secret societies. The more moderate elements in Sinn Féin, largely represented on Dáil Eireann, were provided with a perfect answer to anyone who complained that they did not in their official capacity denounce murder. Government had silenced them.

This action of the Government was a clear declaration of a will to assert and enforce its authority. The trouble was that at this moment it was by far less feared than Sinn Féin ; and of moral authority it had scarcely a remnant in the eyes of Nationalist Ireland. Not merely by right, but by statute, Nationalist Ireland held itself entitled to self-government ; and now a year after the war, five years after the passing of the Home Rule Act, the only legal power in Ireland was one that declared the elected representatives of Ireland to be an illegal assembly. Plainly, something had to be done about the question of Home Rule. ✓

It happened conveniently that a state of war with Turkey still technically existed ; and by the terms of the Act, an Irish Parliament was only to be set up after peace had been concluded. Yet steps had to be taken ; and before the close of the year Mr. Lloyd George outlined pretty clearly what they would be. A measure would be introduced which should set up two Parliaments in Ireland, instead of retaining

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Ulster's counties under government from Westminster. This was the prescription which was to heal Ireland's malady.

The malady was bad. Already it was clear that the first business of policemen was to protect themselves; increasingly clear that they could not manage this. There was display of military force on a scale without precedent, and more disorder than had been ever known. The Government was furiously unpopular—not unnaturally since it was daily suppressing newspapers, or sending people to jail for singing a song. Its line of action made it impossible for any Nationalist to lend it his support. On the other hand, the action of Sinn Féin seemed to the older constitutionalists an access of insanity. All that a wise man could do, they felt, was to wait till the fit spent itself.

When the Home Rule Bill was introduced in February the situation defined itself. Ireland outside of Ulster declared that this was partition in the worst because in the most permanent form. In plain truth, nobody looked at the measure. There had been probably a concealed hope of something that would be acceptable, because it would offer a great relief to the Irish taxpayer. This Bill proposed an annual tribute of eighteen millions. Nobody stopped to consider that this was offset by a rebate of over three millions, and consequently

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offered at least that much of advantage over what existed. Instinctively the country set this picture beside that of an Irish Republic, which would be wholly clear of Great Britain and Great Britain's war debt. Ireland felt no responsibility for the war, no interest in dealing with its consequences. It felt also from the first a strong confidence in its own economic strength if that strength were not to be crippled in the attempt to bear Great Britain's burdens. Advocates of an Irish Republic had, and have, many other reasons in their mind than those of idealistic preference for complete freedom.

On the other hand, Ulster, partly out of opposition, but really in a more genuine spirit of acceptance, declared for the Bill. Ulstermen felt that this plan more than any other conceivable arrangement put their destinies in their own hands. At the beginning of 1920 Belfast was well content with the world. Trade was so good that the men returning from the war were absorbed without difficulty or displacement of others. There was sharp sense of a need for certain local reforms, notably of better provision for housing and for education ; and Belfast had begun to think that these matters would be more promptly and efficiently attended to by a Parliament in Belfast itself. Outside the capitalist world there was also satisfaction. A great strike in the beginning of

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1919 had been successful ; wages were as high as anywhere in the three Kingdoms, hours of employment had been so reduced that existence grew vastly more human and agreeable. These advantages had been reached by a combination of workers which defied attempts to divide it on sectarian lines. Labour was full of confidence, and of good-humoured confidence. At the municipal elections a strong contingent of Independent Labour candidates had been returned to the Corporation ; this element seemed likely to grow in power, and, having no sectarian prejudice, to afford a means for bridging the old gulf. Labour wanted unity in Ireland, because without unity in Ireland the solidarity of Irish Labour was always in danger. Belfast seemed at this time the place in Ireland where it was least difficult to be reasonably hopeful.

Outside of Belfast, the Irish atmosphere grew more charged with tension. Killings of policemen grew in frequency ; petty and often absurd acts of repression by the Government directed against purely political manifestations suggested to many the idea that the rulers of the country were trying to kick it into rebellion. The power of Dáil Éireann's "civil army" asserted itself more and more strenuously in reply, and throughout the South and West of Ireland people were increasingly aware that it

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was dangerous for a man to speak his mind unless that mind agreed with the Republican policy. It was known, too, that the constant strain under which the Royal Irish Constabulary lived was telling on the force. Men were resigning—some from fear, some from a sense that they were engaged in war against their own countrymen, a war perilous and without honour. There were others, too, in the force who turned ugly under this hourly menace. Their comrades were going down, shot like dogs, and by this time it was almost publicly accepted that killing of a policeman was not murder. Coroner's juries brought in verdicts simply to the effect that the deceased had "died of bullet wounds inflicted by persons unknown." In the rare cases when an assailant of the police was killed red-handed, the jury found that he had died fighting for his country as a soldier of the Irish Republic. This train of circumstances led, as it could not but lead, to a savage reprisal. In March 1920 Mr. McCurtain, the Lord Mayor of Cork, was killed at dead of night in his own house before his wife's eyes by a body of masked men. He was a Sinn Féiner of the most honourable type; an active Volunteer and Republican, he had done his best to secure that Irish police should be treated like human beings. There is now no doubt that he was killed by the police, though

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the deed was planned and carried out only by a section of the police in Cork : proposals of the kind had been repudiated by others of the force. But at that time the very conception of police turning wholesale into criminals, like sheepdogs worrying their flock, was so novel that opinion among normal Irishmen throughout the country was divided between two views, one of which was that the Lord Mayor had been killed by the extreme physical force party, as certainly happened later to men originally well known as Sinn Féiners who were suspected of too great friendliness with the police.

This was not the only case in which, about this time, police took the right of punishment into their own hands ; but it was the most dramatic. As yet, it was certainly no part of Government's policy that they should do so.

VI

DURING the first half of 1920 Sinn Féin was making great progress. A hunger strike of political prisoners was backed by a general strike declared by Irish Labour. Irish Labour, ill-organised in detail, ill-provided with funds, had nevertheless been organised in a form which gave it great political power. Larkin's policy had been to draw every class of wage-earner into one great Union—it was called the Transport Union, but it included clerks, shop-assistants, agricultural labourers. Such an organisation could instantly paralyse society. It did so for a couple of days. Then Government gave in. They gave in because the inefficiency of Castle Government was such that Government itself did not know what orders it had issued: the men on hunger strike were striking for what Government had promised that they should get, and they were not getting it. The surrender in April 1920 strengthened and heartened Sinn Féin.

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Its power increased, too, from the fact that its organisation began to render real service to the community. The police were now concentrated for their own protection in groups ; only strong patrols could move about. There was a wide opening for marauders, and the community began to suffer. Sinn Féin provided its own police, and for the first time Ireland had a force employed for the detection and punishment of crime which Ireland at large thought it a patriotic duty to support. The new police worked well for the repression of civil offences, and many were thankful for it who had no sympathy with Sinn Féin's political programme. A more serious trouble broke out in Connaught, where the land hunger was still dominant. Thinking there was no law in the country, men without land began to claim farms for themselves, first on the big grazing ranches, where land purchase had not yet operated ; afterwards, anywhere and everywhere. The covenants made under land purchase were no longer held sacrosanct. Cattle were driven ; bands of men appeared to claim a right, alleging the authority of the Irish Republic ; sometimes rival bands, each with tricolour flags, met on the coveted area. This threatened not only the peace of Ireland but the Sinn Féin movement itself.

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Sinn Féin met the trouble by instituting courts to award on each case. By general consent, the awards were fairly given; the propertied class were relieved of much apprehension; and landlords who agreed to sell under these conditions found that there was a wholly new promptitude, not only in reaching a conclusion, but in securing payment. The success of these tribunals was widely recognised and praised; Sinn Féin had at this period a very good press, the British Government a very bad one.

Further, the elections for county and district councils were now coming on. These bodies had remained in the control of old-fashioned Nationalists. Not a few leading men among them, chairmen of county councils, declared now for the new policy; but most of them retired, leaving the field to others. Sinn Féin swept the board. It was now on the crest of the wave. No other electoral demonstration of its power was possible; that which had been given exceeded the reality, for disgust with the Government policy in detail, resentment of the disregard for Ireland's claim to self-government, and, finally, fear of a quarrel with the secret society, had operated at least as strongly as either hope of or desire for a separate Republic in producing votes or abstentions from voting.

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Moreover, coming into power locally was a more serious matter than replacing the parliamentary party. Nationalists had never been in office at Westminster. They were in office at every local board outside Ulster. Sinn Féin's policy of having no dealings with Dublin Castle was bound to lead to trouble, because of the joint control by the local authorities and the central Local Government Board. If Sinn Féin asserted its principles it could only be at heavy cost to the ratepayers, or through the disorganisation of many local services. These results, which have since produced themselves, were then not seen or felt. It was not realised how even a war of passive resistance must hurt the community in which it is waged. So far, the state of war was only theoretical, except as concerned the police; and in regard to them, the war might be considered as successful. The police were driven out of the field; they were known to be profoundly demoralised. Sinn Féin's view was, that deprived of its police, the British power in Ireland would be like a blind giant, unable to see where it should strike. They did not realise how in war an army strikes everybody where there is resistance. Up to this point, Government was attempting to rely on the machinery of civil government; it was refusing to recognise that a state of war existed. On that line Sinn Féin was bound to

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win. The alternative that it might force its unwieldy opponent to a brutal assertion of force was not considered.

Yet trouble was evident even by the time of the midsummer elections. The country might declare resolutely that it would never have partition; but partition stared it in the face. When the general strike was called in April, its operation instantly partitioned Ireland. The area where it did not operate was marked off as Ulster. In June the cleavage took a more positive way of displaying itself. Derry was historically the sacred city of Protestant Ulster; yet Derry had returned a Sinn Féiner, and at the municipal elections a Nationalist majority got control for the first time of the Corporation, and for the first time Derry knew a Catholic mayor. In June rioting broke out, no new thing in Derry; but it was new and ugly for rifles to be used in a faction fight which lasted for several days—troops being able to do no more than limit the disorder. Honest efforts were made on both sides, and successfully, to get this trouble in hand; there was on everyone's mind the fear lest it should spread over all Ulster. The 12th of July was near. In Belfast the 12th went by without disturbance, but when the men returned to work from their annual holiday war broke out in the streets. Protestant workers did as they had

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done before on several occasions ; they drove the Catholics out of shipyards and mills. There was a fiercer temper now than before among the Catholic Irish, and the minority hit back where they could and how they could. Much property was destroyed ; the casualty list ran to hundreds. Labour's solidarity was completely shattered.

It is alleged that Unionist capitalists desired this outbreak because it would weaken labour, and that the riots were industriously fomented. The pretext for the outbreak was the murder of a well-known and distinguished Ulster officer, Colonel Smyth, in Cork, and of a police inspector, Mr. Swanzy, at Lisburn, near Belfast, on a Sunday morning among a church-going crowd. But in truth the explosion was bound to come. In the shipyards, in the factories, Catholic and Protestant were mingled as they had never been in previous years ; and in the shipyard and the factory Protestant workmen heard their workmates justify the killings of policemen and uphold the Sinn Féin propaganda of severance from Great Britain and of sympathy with all Britain's enemies. The times were too tense for such talk to pass as ordinary expression of opinion. If there was a state of war in the South of Ireland, a state of war was inevitable in Ulster.

Yet the immediate result of these outbreaks

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was, on the balance, to strengthen Sinn Féin and to weaken a Government which from North to South in Ireland could point to nothing but anarchy. In August 1920 Sinn Féin could have made terms with England extraordinarily favourable to Ireland. Government was then undoubtedly prepared to concede to it, as a result of its methods, more than it ever dreamed of conceding to Redmond in response either to his political pleading or to his action in the war. That fact stamps the character of British rule in Ireland. ✓

Mr. Lloyd George made overture after overture, talking of terms available in exchange for peace, which should give Ireland all the privileges of a dominion subject only to military and naval guarantees. In other words, there must be no Irish Republic ; the strategic unity of the two islands must be preserved. All else was open. But many factors prevented the possibility of a settlement at this opportune time. For one thing, Ireland was sick of negotiations ; it had a profound distrust of British statesmen, and the experiences of June 1916 had deepened this. It distrusted Mr. Lloyd George specially and personally ; and Mr. Lloyd George on his part was not willing to put on the table a firm or definite offer. ✓ The only result of his overtures was to increase the belief that his Home Rule Bill was not

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seriously meant ; that some very much larger measure was contemplated which would alternately be offered as a bribe.

More serious, however, was the difficulty which hampered Sinn Féin, if indeed Sinn Féin ever wished to negotiate. They had set up a demand which precluded bargaining. The claim to be a separate nation was a flag. You cannot have half a flag. Once the idea of inclusion in the Empire is accepted, the degree of autonomy to be taken or given may be discussed ; but Sinn Féin had claimed something different in kind, and to discuss the other would have been surrender. Mr. de Valera, moreover, was in America, and at this time his success was impressive. The Presidential election seemed to offer Ireland its supreme chance, and Sinn Féin, always over-sanguine, thought more of the opportunity to come than the opportunity which was presenting itself. Mr. de Valera, however, went as far as he could consistently with maintaining the flag. He offered to agree that England should have the same right of control over the policy of an Irish Republic as America claims or exercises over the policy of Cuba. The statement was honest, since it did not flinch from setting Ireland's claim to national dignity on a level with that of the Cuban state. Most of us would prefer the status, say, of New Zealand ;

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and it may have been in Mr. de Valera's mind that Ireland as a whole would say so.

At all events, the opportunity went by, and Government had no choice but to enforce its authority or surrender at discretion. To use force would have meant in the ordinary way a general declaration of martial law. If this policy were carried out in a spirit of statesmanship, it would have meant a general disarmament of Ireland in so far as that was practicable. In 1918, during Mr. Shortt's Chief Secretaryship, there was a nominal disarmament of the Ulster Volunteers, which only incensed Irish opinion, because it was known to be farcical. Nothing would at any time from 1916 onwards have done more to gain moral authority for the Government than impartial dealing in this matter ; but from 1916 onwards it had been Government's policy to connive at the possession of arms in Ulster and to restrict or forbid it in the rest of Ireland. A Government that should at once have protected police in the exercise of their duties in the South and enforced the right of Catholics to go to their work in the North would have been a considerable rival to Sinn Féin. But Government apparently lacked either the will or the power to do these things ; it was not prepared to hold Ireland with an overwhelming force of troops, it was not prepared to surrender ; and it adopted another

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policy, which was that of employing the police, specially reinforced by British ex-service men, as a body of irregulars, who would strike at the Republican army very much as the Republican army struck at the police. About August 1920 the campaign of unavowed reprisals began.

It began gradually. Where convictions could not be had, men suspected of complicity were arrested, and were shot, it was said, in attempting to escape; though the whole facts of the case often made this incredible. Again, the murder of a policeman was often followed by the burning of houses, by the "shooting up" of a town, or simply by the taking out of leading Sinn Féiners and executing them. No responsibility was accepted by the authorities, and in some more flagrant cases, for instance the sack of Balbriggan, the authorities admitted that outrageous indiscipline had been displayed.

But there is no doubt that the Irish Government was obsessed by the belief that all this campaign against the police was the work of a relatively small group of organised desperadoes which could be destroyed, broken up, or intimidated out of existence. Facts proved that as reprisals grew in intensity, so also did attacks on the police. None the less, the police were making themselves felt. There were now

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two terrors in Ireland. It would be difficult to say whether the community at large were more afraid of the police or of the gunmen. But it was, and is, clear that the rebel organisation had a considerable measure of moral support and sympathy, whereas the police were the objects of universal detestation.

From October onwards things took a marked turn for the worse. The policy of passive resistance found its ultimate expression in the hunger strike, and Government decided to force the issue. The Lord Mayor of Cork, Mr. McSwiney, who had succeeded to the man murdered by police in the spring, took the ordeal on himself ; but twelve others were told off to face it also. After an agony of incredible duration Mr. McSwiney died ; several of the other hunger strikers succumbed also ; and the strike was called off. Great Britain had shown the impotence of passive resistance in this form, and the party of violent action found itself so far justified. Moreover, the hopes for a settlement without bloodshed through the authoritative intervention of America were dashed by the refusal of both parties at the Presidential election to adopt the Irish Republican cause in any decisive manner. Finally, the Irish Republican army found itself attacked with energy by the Crown forces—especially by the body of auxiliary police raised from ex-officers.

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Attack and counter-attack, murder and counter-murder followed each other in a dreadful sequence. Even sympathisers with Sinn Féin were shocked by the concerted assassination of fifteen officers in their beds in Dublin, on the morning of November 21. But on that same Sunday afternoon, in an attempt to hold up and search a great crowd at a football match, police and military opened fire and inflicted some fifty casualties. A week later fifteen of the auxiliary cadets were ambushed in County Cork, and the wounded butchered where they lay. In revenge, the police burnt down a great part of the most prosperous quarter of Cork city. Martial law was proclaimed over an area which soon covered the whole of Munster and extended to two counties in Leinster.

It was in these circumstances that the Bill establishing self-government for Ireland became law, not materially altered from the form in which it was introduced. Under these conditions Ireland is to make its start in the task of self-government.

All the features in the political landscape are obscured by the fog of war. The elections have revealed nothing of the facts concerning "Southern Ireland" (which extends to the extreme north of the island) except that the present system of government is held in detesta-

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tion. Partly because they realise the ruinous consequences of dividing command in a state of war, and because they desire that Sinn Féin shall have its full chance, constitutional Nationalists have refrained from contesting any seats. But undoubtedly fear of the risk to any rival candidate and knowledge that fear would deter most voters from supporting opposition to Republicanism have contributed to bring about the result. In "Northern Ireland" Nationalists and Sinn Féiners decided to put forward combined candidatures under the system of election by the single transferable vote; and the results show that six Nationalists are returned as against six Sinn Féiners. This may be taken as a rough indication of the division over Catholic Ireland as a whole. But two facts stand out. Unionist Ulster has won more seats than its opponents expected. It has forty members out of a total of fifty-two. This means that Protestant Ulster is solid in a determination to assert in practice its claim to the right of self-government. The second fact is equally unmistakable. One-fourth of the members elected, representing two distinct sections of opinion, are pledged to take no part in working the new institution; and those whom they represent may be counted on to obstruct its working by all means in their power. Thus, self-government will in practice

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be exercised in "Ulster" only through those elements which have been most vehement in opposition to Home Rule; it will operate through a Parliament which must be abnormal and unrepresentative of what is a composite community. Independent Labour, having been identified with Sinn Féin in the eyes of Protestant workmen, has not succeeded in returning any candidate, and will be at best a disaffected group. Generally, one-third of the population which Sir James Craig must undertake to govern will do everything to make his task impossible—unless there is some completely new political development.

In Southern Ireland, all members except the four representatives of Dublin University are pledged to Sinn Féin and so to a Republic. They cannot conceivably take the oath of allegiance, and unless a majority of them do so a Crown Colony system of government will be set up. This will necessarily be an administration relying in the main on martial law. It is not certain that the Lord Lieutenant will be able to find men willing to serve on the nominated Council which is an ordinary though not an indispensable part of all such governments. But no matter what the form or who the persons employed, the government will be in essence military rule of a territory in rebellion. There is no doubt that Great

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Britain has sufficient force to maintain its control in a military sense; but such rule must necessarily be ruinous to the country, and only less ruinous than the efforts which will be made to shake it off. A signal example has been given in the burning of the Custom House.

Material loss and destruction of all that makes beauty and amenity are not the worst results of a prolonged state of guerilla war, and the militant leaders of Sinn Féin are said to be preparing for a three years struggle. It can never be a war of large operations. The total strength of men paraded at drills and inspections by the Irish Republican Army is said not to reach thirty thousand; they can have no artillery, and if they have rifles for all their men they have no reserve of ammunition. Necessity drives them to a campaign of petty ambushes which can produce no decisive result, and which even against small armed parties must often bear the likeness of assassination. Moreover, assassination is used habitually against the police, and often against unarmed soldiers. Many civilians are done to death in cold blood as spies. The agents of their deeds are generally very young men, sometimes mere boys. Demoralisation is inevitable. Equally inevitable is the growth of a class which under self-government will be prone to use against any

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form of legal constraint the methods which it has learnt to employ against British power.

These consequences, material and moral, of a prolonged strife are evident to all thinking men, and the Church which is dominant in Ireland cannot fail to take them into consideration. Many bishops, from Cardinal Logue downwards, have spoken in condemnation of crime and even of violence. But the strong sympathy with Sinn Féin which is felt and avowed by a great body of the clergy prevents any united action to force a settlement on lines which involve a surrender of the demand for a separate Republic. Yet it is probable that when Mr. de Valera, before the elections took place, asked for an interview with Sir James Craig, ecclesiastical persuasion was brought to bear upon him; equally probable that the British Government urged Sir James Craig to accept any such overture if it came.

In the electoral contest Belfast has won; for outside the Belfast area the opposition held its ground strongly. Belfast can afford to offer terms; and its interest prompts it to do so.

In truth, Belfast's prosperity has been rudely shaken. Its staple industry, the linen trade, has a great proportion of the mills shut down. The shipyards are short of work, and likely to be worse off. These industries look outside Ireland for their markets; but the linen trade,

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at least, might well push its business nearer home. Moreover, a great distributing trade throughout Ireland exists—or existed; for it has been practically destroyed by a retaliatory boycott. Economically, Ulster is in a much worse position than the rest of Ireland; and the Imperial contribution imposed on the six counties was fixed when trade boomed in Belfast, and is almost equal to that to be levied on the rest of Ireland.

Thus Ulster stands in urgent need of coming to an accommodation with the rest of Ireland. Yet it is probable that no mere sense of its immediate material interest would induce Ulster to place itself directly and absolutely under the rule of a Parliament of all Ireland. Too many sentiments are involved. It is as certain as anything can be that nothing but a crushing defeat in war, which must be a civil war, would induce Ulster to become part of a Republic separated from the British Empire. On the other hand, I believe that Ulster would readily, though not immediately, come to accept the type of state of which Australia is an example, having a central Parliament for national affairs while provincial matters are left to provincial assemblies.

Mr. de Valera has more than once said that an Irish Republic would be willing to leave to Ulster this degree of separate freedom. But

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neither Mr. de Valera, on the part of Sinn Féin, nor Mr. Dillon nor Mr. Devlin, has shown any disposition to agree that Ulster shall be allowed to begin as a separate state, as free of control by the rest as was Victoria or New South Wales before the combined action of the Australian states brought the Commonwealth of Australia into unified being. There is no sign of acquiescence in partition.

I, personally, hold that unity does not exist in Ireland ; or rather, that unity is latent, and must be given time to emerge. It cannot be imposed from without. Moreover, the North has secured statutory right to be a separate entity. It has been allowed to define its own area, excluding three Ulster counties the inclusion of which would have made possible, and even probable, a combination between Nationalists and Labour which would have put the Unionists in a minority. It has kept two counties in which there is a Catholic majority, and by retaining them has ensured that there shall always be a strong agricultural vote to balance the extreme democratic developments which may come in the industrial area. Whether justly or unjustly acquired, it has a status which it could and would defend by physical force. That is an ultimate fact of the situation.

For the rest of Ireland it is impossible to

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forecast developments. Sinn Féin at present works hand in glove with Labour ; yet Labour in the South of Ireland can be in no permanent alliance with the preponderant farming class. But while the struggle for freedom lasts Ireland will tend to present a united opposition. Those who hold that Ireland's best way to full self-government lies in provisional acceptance of what is offered are a negligible minority. Those who hold that Ireland would accept an offer of such powers as are enjoyed by one of the Dominions are probably in the right ; but if they insist that such an offer shall carry with it the compulsion of Ulster to come at once under a central Parliament, no party in Great Britain is likely to make such an offer, or to be able to carry it into effect.

To concede to Ulster and to the rest of Ireland all such powers as were enjoyed by Victoria and New South Wales before their union, lowering at the same time the Imperial contribution asked for, would be a method suitable to the facts of the case. In view of such a concession Ulster might probably agree to vest at once in the shadowy Council of Ireland established under this Act such functions as would make it a reality, and would save much confusion in Irish government. But to make such a proposal, or to accept it, would show a kind of wisdom which has been entirely absent

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from England's attitude to Ireland, Ireland's attitude to England, and the attitude of Northern and Southern Ireland to each other, during these late years.

All that can be said now, immediately after the elections, is that the situation is more plastic than it has been since the Convention broke up or than it is likely to be after the Ulster Parliament has settled down to the task of governing a population of which one-third is Catholic through a purely Protestant assembly and ministry, and has set its teeth to defeat embittered opposition; that the desire for peace is widespread, and that many Irishmen, North and South, would be glad to astonish the world by a settlement of this old trouble reached by Irishmen in Ireland; finally, that a common feeling that the British Treasury is trying to drain Ireland may be a uniting influence with a practical purpose. On the other hand, the continued series of detestable murders in the South, some committed upon women, and the continued exclusion under threat of murder of Catholics in Belfast from their work on the plea that they sympathise with murders, must, so long as they last, make peace and unity and good government almost unattainable in Ireland.

No attempt has been made here to analyse the governing motives of Sinn Féin; it is difficult to give a fair account of a movement

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with which the critic has little sympathy. But no intelligent man can dispute the sincerity of an idealism which inspires so much energy, devotion, and personal self-sacrifice. Unhappily, like many other idealists, Irish Republicans find it impossible to believe that other people may be attached with equal sincerity to ideals which are different and are not less honourable. There is a tendency to believe that Ulstermen and Englishmen can only feel through their pockets—except in so far as they are actuated by a bigoted dislike of the Roman Church.

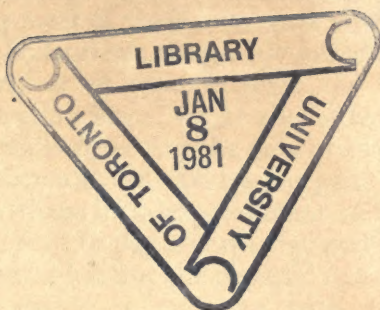
This fundamental misconception of motives has been probably the main cause of those mistakes in direction which have, as I hold, rendered sterile most of the sacrifices made by Sinn Féin's adherents. Remarkably ingenious and versatile in all the detail of their tactics, both political and military, they have been wrong on all the great things; they have miscalculated the world forces which they tried to use; they have antagonised what they should have turned to their help. The essential achievement for their purpose of establishing a strong Irish nationality was to unite Ireland; every step they took, every aspiration they expressed, was so framed as to divide Ireland deeper than ever.

Outside of the towns, Ireland is strong

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economically. Mainly a country of farmers, who do most of their own work with their own hands, Ireland has not greatly raised its standard of living or of expense since the war began. Its people have paid themselves the old wages while receiving the new prices ; much of their accumulated savings has gone into banks, more perhaps into improvement of their farms. Ireland is fit to pay its own way and be prosperous ; but it has not the gigantic resources which should enable it to cope with the world's indebtedness after five years of ruin.

Revolutionary propaganda of the Bolshevist type has taken considerable hold of the Southern cities, and a prolonged struggle of the present type will strengthen this grip. Nationalist sentiment probably trusts that the Church will be able to check this tendency. It will not be easy. Yet Ireland is in the main a country of old-fashioned agricultural peasant folk, whether Protestant or Catholic ; and the strength and sanity which are in every peasant stock will be increased by their late years of relative prosperity. This increase, however, cannot show itself till the political fever has reached a close, and a healthier, more normal way of life come to prevail.



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